

From: greg@fishmartinc.com <Gregory Pope >

Message:

Joint Committee on Environment Members and HB5293 Sponsors,

I am a dedicated advocate for animal welfare who implores you to vote NO to House Bill 5293 (HB5293). Connecticut already has extensive animal cruelty and welfare laws. Enforce those current laws! HB5293 is yet another superfluous law with a very misleading stated purpose. Are you aware this bill makes someone a criminal for presenting an animal education program with a tortoise, parrot, frog, gecko, or almost any animal to a school class? Rather than helping animals, this bill actually harms the future of animal welfare and appreciation by banning the experiences that draw most people into animal-related fields such as those in biology, veterinary, and conservation.

As a Connecticut resident, I do not appreciate that one of my legislators is misinforming people about this bill. There is not a blanket exemption for environmental education programs, as reported by at least one legislator. These programs are only allowed if the program is: administered by a facility accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, engaged in licensed falconry, or permitted by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. While I would hope this misinformation by a legislator is unintentional, it seems to be intentionally misleading to deter opposition.

This is not a bill that would just, "prohibit the use of wild and exotic animals in traveling circuses." The overreach and injustice travel well beyond this misleading "purpose." You must remember that legislators do not enforce the laws. Enforcement officers must enforce the law, not what a legislator claims a bill will do. This bill is poorly written and rife with unintended consequences.

Among other overreaching measures, this bill bans animal outreach programs before not only school students, but also Scout troops, fair exhibitions, and more, classifying such beneficial programs as inherently cruel. Those who would travel with their animals to teach schoolchildren about biology, conservation, and animal physiology will be made into criminals!

It seems HB5293 lacks research. For example, the bill would ban educational programs involving any non-domesticated animal. This bill is not about protecting animals. It is about removing animals from our lives and experiences. The fact is that this legislation is unnecessary. Punish the "bad actors" and criminals with current laws. No new law is needed to protect animals as Connecticut can already prosecute animal abusers.

Superfluous and redundant laws are becoming commonplace. Tax dollars and legislative resources are continually being wasted to propose duplicative laws. Even worse, collective punishment is becoming an accepted practice in our government. Instead of focusing on criminals, many new laws choose to punish good citizens.

This bill is far-reaching and rife with unintended consequences, including making criminals out of those dedicated individuals who responsibly conduct educational programs with animals.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Please realize that HB5293 is illogical and unjust. Have a good day.

Gregory Pope